

An x-ray is a painless test that uses low-dose radiation to produce an image, or picture. The length of time required for an x-ray examination depends on the part of the body being x-rayed and how many x-ray pictures need to be taken. A single x-ray takes only a few minutes; however, x-rays of other areas, such as the spine, usually involve several different pictures.

Before the Test

- Check with your healthcare provider or with the radiology department where you will receive your x-ray to be sure you can eat and take your regular medications before having your x-ray.
- When you arrive at the medical facility, you will be asked to change into a gown and to remove any objects containing metal, such as jewelry that may show up on the x-ray and interfere with the reading.

Often the test will take place with you lying on an x-ray table. Certain x-rays, such as those done on the chest, require that you stand instead. However, the technician can work with you if you have special needs for positioning and comfort.

During the Test

An x-ray examination usually involves the following steps:

- The x-ray technician will place the square or rectangular metal box holding the x-ray film beneath or behind the body part being x-rayed.
- Then the technician will position the arm of the x-ray machine above or next to the part being x-rayed.
- After aligning the film, body part, and arm of the machine, the technician will step behind a divider and take the x-ray picture. You will be instructed to stay still while the x-ray is being taken.
- Usually the technician will ask you to remain on the x-ray table for a few minutes while the films are being developed. The technician must be sure the x-rays have turned out well and do not need to be repeated before you can leave.

After the Test

Discuss the results of the test with your healthcare provider.